



**Manchester  
Metropolitan  
University**

---

[Millington, Chris](#) (2018) Immigrants and undesirables: “terrorism” and the “terrorist” in 1930s France. *Critical Studies on Terrorism*, 12 (1). pp. 40-59. ISSN 1753-9153

---

**Downloaded from:** <http://e-space.mmu.ac.uk/621479/>

**Version:** Accepted Version

**Publisher:** Taylor & Francis

**DOI:** <https://doi.org/10.1080/17539153.2018.1489210>

Please cite the published version

<https://e-space.mmu.ac.uk>

**Title**

Immigrants and Undesirables: 'Terrorism' and the 'terrorist' in 1930s France

**Journal**

Critical Studies on Terrorism

**Author**

Chris Millington

**Affiliation**

Associate Professor, History

Swansea University

[c.d.millington@swansea.ac.uk](mailto:c.d.millington@swansea.ac.uk)

## **Immigrants and Undesirables: ‘Terrorism’ and the ‘terrorist’ in 1930s France**

### **Introduction**

This article examines the ways in which the terms ‘terrorism’ and ‘terrorist’ were applied as labels in 1930s France. In doing so, it deconstructs understandings of both terms during the troubled last decade of the democratic Third Republic. We do not define terrorism here. Our approach rests on the contention that terrorism is not an “ontologically stable, trans-historical” and “generalizable phenomenon” and that it does not exist outside the discourse that constructs it (Ditrych 2014, 1; Jackson 2015, 487; 494-5). We examine the historically-situated assumptions and premises that informed the circumstances in which the words were deployed in order to discover their sense to contemporaries (Ditrych 2014; Jackson 2015; Shaya 2010; Zulaika and Douglass 1996). Investigating the ways in which ‘terrorism’ was ‘framed’ (Smith et al, 2017: 92-3) in press, political and legal sources, as well as cultural productions, we seek to identify the values and qualities invested in the word and its application to certain behaviours and practices. The aim is to elucidate ‘terrorism’ as it existed as a label in the popular imaginary, defined in Gregory Shaya’s work on French anarchist terrorism during the 1890s as “the storehouse of words, images, and stories... the what-goes-without-saying” (Shaya 2010, 522) evident in political and cultural discourse. Consequently, the terms ‘terrorism’ and ‘terrorist’ in this article do not refer to these phenomenon in the sense of objective realities but rather as discursively-constructed categories (Smith et al, 2017: 92).

Concepts of terrorism during the 1930s were highly contextualised. Absent were the attempts of the 1890s to explain terrorist action as a symptom of mental illness, hereditary degeneracy, or the duping of the ‘weak-minded’; these explanations spoke to the concerns of French society at the end of the nineteenth century, not those of the early twentieth (Jackson 2008). Likewise, anarchism, as the political doctrine widely regarded to be behind a wave of attacks at the turn of the century, was no longer employed as a byword for terrorism. Rather, the terrorist threat of the interwar years was understood with reference to the ideological confrontation of the epoch and the attendant fear of hostile foreign intervention in French domestic politics. Such understandings cut across the political divide. For left and right, terrorism was “foreign”, a nefarious enterprise imported from Berlin, Rome, or Moscow, depending on one’s political standpoint. Its perpetrators were immigrants and mercenaries, illegal aliens or refugees, who had abused French hospitality. Any French worthy of the name simply did not – could not – perpetrate terrorism. Terrorist violence thus became an important factor in discussions over immigration control. In this sense, the French of the 1930s were confronting challenges already encountered earlier in the twentieth century in Great Britain and the United States where violence perpetrated by migrant anarchists had prompted a tightening up of immigration and citizenship legislation (Bantman 2013; Preston 1994). Conversely, the French governments of the 1890s had responded to the threat of anarchism with the so-called ‘Villainous Laws’ that targeted anarchist movements and publications rather than foreigners. It was only during the 1930s that an understanding of “terrorism” as a foreign phenomenon alien to a French ‘mentality’ began to take hold.

In the study of terrorism in France since the ‘first wave’ of anarchist terror, the interwar period has received relatively little attention. There are some limited studies of terrorist acts during the 1930s. Katherine Foshko and Karelle Vincent have investigated the response to the Russian Paul Gorgulov’s assassination of French President Paul Doumer in

May 1932 from the emigrant Russian and French communities respectively. Frédéric Monier has examined aspects of the assassinations of King Alexander I of Yugoslavia and French Foreign Minister Louis Barthou by the Croatian revolutionary movement the Ustaša in Marseille on 9 October 1934. Péter Kovács, Virginie Sansico and Ben Saul have shed light on the legal response to the problem of interwar terrorism from France and the League of Nations respectively (Foshko 2009; Kovács 2002; Monier 2012a, 2012b; Sansico 2016; Saul 2006; Vincent 1999). These works have not investigated political and cultural understandings of “terrorism” in France.

On the other hand, historians have undertaken substantial research into the Organisation secrète d’action révolutionnaire nationale (OSARN), better known as the ‘Cagoule’, or Hood. This extreme right-wing organisation committed a series of violent attacks during 1937. Its plan to overturn the Third Republic culminated in an unsuccessful coup attempt in November that year, after which the group was exposed and its leaders arrested. For a long time, the group was the subject of few historical studies largely because of its association with fascism and the bitter debate surrounding the strength of this ideology in France. According to Michel Winock, for example, the Cagoule, “belongs to the history of secret societies more than that of fascism,” with its leader, Eugène Deloncle, “particularly at ease in the world of plots, oaths, mysteries.” Winock thus devotes barely a page to the group in his recently updated 400-page history of nationalism, anti-Semitism and fascism in modern France (Winock 2014, 250-1). Thanks to the work of Gayle K. Brunelle, Annette Finley-Croswhite, Joel Blatt, and DLL Parry, we know much about the Cagoule’s organisation, style and tactics; these historians have detailed the frightening seriousness of the group’s plot against the Republic (Blatt 2002; Brunelle and Finley-Croswhite 2012; Parry 2003). For our purpose, the manner in which the press and political establishment trivialised and ridiculed

the Cagoulaards – *French* ‘terrorists’ - following their exposure further underscores the ‘Otherness’ with which terrorism was framed.

The first section of the article addresses the deployment of the words ‘terrorism’ and ‘terrorist’ in the press, politics, law and cultural texts. It shows that though these labels were applied to a variety of crimes and injustices, they were not entirely without meaning; their contours were shaped through their repeated use in relation to the actions of foreigners and immigrants in France and abroad. Underpinning these notions was the implication that Frenchmen could not commit terrorist acts. The second section concerns a series of violent incidents, commonly described as terrorism, that took place during 1937 and which culminated in the bombing of two buildings in Paris on September 11, 1937. The bombings brought to a head simmering anger at the so-called ‘immigrant problem’ in France and its perceived link to terror, prompting discussion in government about a special ‘Foreigners’ Statute’. The final section provides a test case for the contention that ‘terrorism’ was a label applied only to a foreign scourge. The bombers of September 11, 1937, were in fact French. The reception of this news illustrates the rootedness of understandings of terrorism in foreignness. Ultimately, we propose that the contemporary discursive framework of ‘terrorism’ in France – which is usually traced back to the colonial violence of the Algerian War (1954-1962) – may be perceived in the debates over terrorist violence of the 1930s.

### **Terrorism Everywhere: The 1930s**

It is a cliché of the scholarly literature on terrorism to mention Jacob Hardman’s essay on the phenomenon, published in the 1933 *The Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences*. Hardman concluded that terrorism had, since the turn of the century, become an outdated political strategy and he predicted its imminent disappearance (for example Rapoport 2011, 115; Schinkel 2009, 176; Zulaika and Douglas 1996, 17, 100). The French of the early 1930s

would hardly have agreed; the country in fact suffered a number of attacks framed as ‘terrorism’ in parliament and the press. In May 1932, for example, Russian émigré Paul Gorgulov assassinated President of the Republic Paul Doumer during a reception for authors of the Great War veterans’ movement. The assassination was perpetrated between the first and second rounds of the legislative elections. Contemporary observers thus refused to believe that Gorgulov had worked alone, believing instead that he was an operative in a larger international plot designed to destabilise the country at a politically sensitive moment. Minister of the Interior André Tardieu immediately blamed a communist conspiracy. In turn, the communist party made its own accusation of a conspiracy involving Tardieu, Paris Prefect of Police Jean Chiappe, and the white Russian exile community (Coeuré and Monier 2000). In a book penned soon after the incident, right-wing journalist Paul Darlix depicted the attack as part of a global communist strategy that had also entailed the sinking of the French ocean liner the *MS Georges-Philippar* on its maiden voyage and the murder of Japanese Prime Minister Inukai Tsuyoshi, both of which had occurred within a week of the Doumer killing. We must therefore set Hardman’s 1933 optimism about the demise of terrorism against Darlix’s warning that ‘terrorism’ was a threat not only to France but to every nation. “TERRORISM IS BREAKING OUT AROUND THE WORLD,” he shrieked (Darlix 1932, 10, 222).

In 1930s France, the term ‘terrorism’ was thus applied to both the assassination of the head of state and the sinking of an ocean liner and, it seems, everything in between. While the perpetration of physical violence was not necessary for an act to be qualified as terrorism, the contemporary press applied the label to many different acts of violence, including (but not limited to) armed robbery, State repression, assassination, murder, arbitrary and summary punishment, anticolonial campaigns, political demonstrations, unlawful imprisonment,

strikes, mutilation, acts of vandalism, and the desecration of Church property. Terrorism was a nebulous term.

Nevertheless, in the tense political climate of the 1930s, the word was frequently attached to the ideology of one's enemies. Left-wingers readily referred to violence perpetrated in the name of fascism at home and abroad as terrorism, while the right frequently condemned the violence of international Soviet communism in the same terms. In December 1934, for example, the socialist party newspaper *Le Populaire* denounced the fascist Francistes as a "terrorist mafia" in the heart of Paris (*Le Populaire*, December 3, 1934). On the other hand, speaking in the lower house of parliament, the Chamber of Deputies in March 1937, Jacques Poitou-Duplessy, a deputy for the conservative Fédération Républicaine, condemned the communist party's attacks on right-wing groups during the previous decade as, "acts of terrorism" to which more than 5000 people had fallen victim (*Journal Officiel*, March 23, 1937, 1187). Consequently, if during the late nineteenth-century 'in popular imagination the terrorist bomber and the anarchist became the same thing', the apparent politics of the 1930s terrorist were less clear-cut (Jensen 2006, 7; Bouhey 2008, 221-5).

Third Republican legal texts offered no more a precise definition of the phenomenon because 'terrorism' was not a crime. This lacuna owed something to the fact that the French counter-terrorism laws of the 1890s – not to mention the texts of the international agreements of 1898 and 1904 (Jensen 2015, 366-77) - targeted anarchism rather than 'terrorism' (though the two phenomena were conflated). Consequently, in 1930s France, suspects arrested in relation to an act of violence commonly perceived as terrorism in the press were charged solely with the offence committed, for example, murder. A further charge of criminal conspiracy (*association de malfaiteurs*) could be levelled at a group of wrongdoers. Men and women suspected of crimes linked to terrorism were thus subject to the regime of common law and no allowance was made for "terrorism" as an aggravating circumstance or motive.



It was within the power of the Republican authorities to grant suspects the status of a political detainee – defined as a person whose political passions alone had driven them to break the law. Such a status could ameliorate drastically the conditions of one's incarceration (Archives nationales [hereafter AN] BB18 3061/2, December 1 1937). However, "terrorists" were not treated as political criminals because to do so would have rendered them exempt from international extradition treaties. Ultimately, the failure of the law to define terrorism caused much frustration. To charge a "terrorist" with a common law crime seemed not to give due weight to the heinous intention behind the act. French jurists thus proposed the codification of a new crime pertaining to the membership of a terrorist organisation yet the charge of criminal conspiracy remained the practice for the rest of the 1930s (Donnedieu de Vabres 1935, 7-21).

Despite the absence of a legal definition of the phenomenon, reports of political 'terrorism' – usually understood as violence in the service of a political goal from assassinations to warfare - appeared frequently in the newspapers and popular picture magazines of the period. The question as to just how such violence advanced a political agenda was academic. Terrorism was an end in itself: "destruction with no other goal than to destroy" (*Ce soir*, September 13, 1937, 5). Terrorist violence was wanton and cruel, impossible for reasonable people to comprehend. It was a crime of "odious absurdity," devised and practiced in, "a labyrinthine domain" where logic did not apply (*Le Matin*, January 14, 1938, 1; *Le Figaro*, September 13, 1937, 1). As for the criminals who committed the attacks, they could not be understood as conventional political activists because their fanaticism, ferocity, madness, and contempt for human life knew no limits (*Le Temps*, October 15, 1934, 1). Men such as Gorgulov possessed preternatural attributes; the Russian had the "build of a giant" and spoke "like a 'clairvoyant' in a trance" (Darlix 1932, 27-8). Imprisonment would not change the behaviour of the terrorist; once released these men

would simply return to their bomb-making laboratory, their training camp, and their secret meetings (*Détective*, May 20, 1937, 2-4).

The secretive nature of presumed terrorist groups exacerbated the perceived threat that they represented. Conspiring in the shadows, one could neither determine their next target nor the scale of their operations (Zulaika and Douglas 1996, 4). ‘Terrorist’ groups were thus presented as mysterious organisations whose tentacles stretched beyond the borders of a single territory. For Darlix the 1932 assassination of Doumer was merely the first skirmish in a “gigantic battle,” an “underhand and merciless war” waged against the “civilised Universe” by the Soviet Union (Darlix 1932, 144, 220). Within a week of the 1934 Marseille assassinations, *Paris-Soir* reported that the outrage was, “carefully prepared by a vast international terrorist group” (*Paris-Soir*, October 14, 1934, 1). *Le Temps* concurred, warning that the “monstrous activity” of terrorist organisations presented a “grave threat to our whole civilisation” (*Le Temps*, October 14, 1934, 1). The exhaustive police investigation of the murders and the subsequent trial did little to convince some voices in the press that the truth of the crime had been fully uncovered: in 1937 picture magazine *Détective* alleged that only ten percent of the truth was known about the group that committed the crime (the Ustaša) and its network in France; the rest remained hidden (Law 2009, 154-7; *Détective*, May 20, 1937, 2-4). This claim coincided with the reported arrest of Stepan Marusic, an alleged Ustaša terrorist, in Paris (*Le Petit Journal*, May 11, 1937, 4). *Le Petit Journal* claimed, “It is difficult to believe that this terrorist... came to Paris, just for a walk about. Much is being done at the present time to find the accomplices of this terrorist. There is even a rumour that a second *ustaše* was arrested and that nine bombs were found at his residence” (*Le Petit Journal*, May 13, 1937, 6). The newspaper later speculated that a Ustaša-style group was once again operating in France. Despite police knowledge of an imminent attack, the new group was, “secret, impenetrable” and officers “remained powerless” against it (*Le*

*Petit Journal*, September 16, 1937, 4.) Terrorism was thus presented as the deed of shadowy conspirators with quasi-supernatural powers. In addressing such a problem, the significance of known information paled in comparison to the terrible immensity of the unknown (Saldaña 1936, 27).

One of the most significant attributes of the French construction of terrorism was the foreignness of the phenomenon. Terrorism was foreign in two senses. Firstly, the geography of terrorism rendered it foreign; it was a crime committed abroad. During the 1930s, the press frequently reported acts of terrorism perpetrated, for example, in Germany and Austria. As the decade drew to a close, terror attacks in Palestine, China, and Great Britain filled newspaper columns. Aside from the high-profile assassinations of Doumer, Alexander, and Barthou, terrorism on French soil was confined to the periphery of the territory. Thus, Nazi violence against the inhabitants of the Saar protectorate – which voted to be reincorporated into Germany rather than France in January 1935 – qualified as terrorist in the eyes of the French (*L'Ouest-Éclair*, January 17, 1934, 2).

Secondly, terrorism was typically understood as a phenomenon that, if perpetrated in France, did not originate from there. Pierre Lermite spoke for many French when, in the wake of Doumer's 1932 assassination, he wrote in *La Croix*, "it's nearly always foreigners who come to commit assassinations in France" (*La Croix*, May 8, 1932, 1, cited in Schor 1985, 634). Such a comment chimed with the growing climate of xenophobia in 1930s France. As more and more refugees fled persecution in central and eastern Europe and arrived in France, anti-foreigner feeling made steady inroads into moderate opinion especially after the election of France's first socialist and Jewish Prime Minister, Léon Blum, in 1936 (Caron 1999, 268-9). Historians seeking to explain the growth of 1930s xenophobia have given due attention to the recurrence of historic manifestations of racism and anti-Semitism as well as to the more immediate problem of unemployment and misery that brought foreign

“job-stealers” under the spotlight. The perceived connection between immigrants, foreigners, and terrorism, on the other hand, is rarely commented upon by historians (Harouni 1999, 69; Caron 1999, 268-9).<sup>1</sup> Terrorism does not feature, for example, amongst Gérard Noiriel’s list of the recurring themes of French xenophobia during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (Noiriel 1996, 200-218).<sup>2</sup>

The link between terrorist violence and foreigners was steadily reinforced throughout the 1930s as evermore immigrants arrived in the country. The press was replete with reports of foreign terrorists residing freely within French territory. Gorgulov, for example, had been subject to an unfulfilled expulsion order. His case was thus framed as indicative of a much larger problem: the abuse of French hospitality and the danger that “exiled fanatics” represented (Coeuré and Monier 2000, 38-43). The right-wing *Le Matin* was particularly vociferous in its campaign against what it termed the “invasion” of foreign “undesirables” (*Le Matin*, May 11, 1934, 1). In the week that followed the 1934 Marseille attack, the newspaper’s masthead demanded, “Land of Decent People, France Must Not Give Asylum to Undesirables.” It later suggested the establishment of labour camps in French colonies to house those immigrants who, once expelled, could not return to their homeland (*Le Matin*, January 5, 1935, 2). Given the tenor of the times, other political titles echoed such concerns. They were expressed in the popular magazines of the period, too. In the May 1937 instalment of *Détective* magazine’s series, “On the lookout for terrorists,” author Marcel

---

<sup>1</sup> Rahma Harouni writes that in 1937, “a series of astonishing murders and attacks implicating foreigners had reactivated hostility to non-natives,” but this point is not developed further.

<sup>2</sup> However, in *Immigration, antisémitisme et racisme en France (XIXe-XXe siècle)*, Noiriel writes that political violence in France contributed to a “climate of insecurity,” that affected immigration (434).

Montarron warned of the “army of outlaws” trapped in France because they were unwelcome in their homeland (*Déetective*, May 20, 1937, 2-4).

Legal understandings of terrorism placed the foreigner at their centre, too. This is perhaps unsurprising: contemporary legal and international institutions conceived of terrorism as an international crime. However, it seems that a *certain type* of foreigner was responsible for terrorist violence. Writing in the *Revue internationale de droit penal*, Spanish law professor Quintiliano Saldaña claimed that a political crime was different to a terrorist crime in one important aspect: “the political criminal will necessarily be a subject of the State, a national, while the terrorist is often a foreigner, sometimes a stateless person, [an]anarchist or nomad, a shirker, expelled by all parties as undesirable, [and] a mercenary (*sicaire gagé*)” (Saldaña 1936, 29). Ultimately, terrorism as a foreign and imported crime was understood as a symptom of the broader “immigrant problem.”

Several fictional works serve to illustrate that “terrorism” was prominent in the popular and cultural realm of 1930s France. In these productions, conspiracy and terrorism were tinged with foreignness. In March 1936, Marc Allégret’s *Sous les yeux d’occident* opened to very favourable reviews in cinemas across France. Moviegoers were no strangers to the reality of terrorism: in 1934 audiences had watched the Marseille assassinations in picture house newsreels (Monier 2012, 2). Allégret’s film, inspired by Joseph Conrad’s 1911 novel *Under Western Eyes*, told the story of Razumov, a student in an unnamed eastern European country, caught up in a revolutionary plot to assassinate a leading political figure. Critics speculated about the location of the drama. *La Revue de l’Ecran* suggested that the film drew on the nineteenth-century nihilism and anarchism of Tsarist Russia (*La Revue de l’Ecran*, August 8, 1936, 1-2). Meanwhile, communist film critic Georges Sadoul claimed that the film portrayed activists of Polish terrorism, with whom Conrad had been familiar, having grown up in the country. For Sadoul, the film was “remarkable,” for, among other

things, the “violence of the action”; “[p]erhaps even the best film of this season,” the critic concluded (*Regards*, April 2, 1936, 17). The following year, Alfred Hitchcock’s *Sabotage* opened at the Parisian Cinéma Marbeuf. The film told the story of a foreign terrorist organisation and its bombing campaign in contemporary London. As the film prepared to open in Paris, the line between fact and fiction blurred. *L’Intransigeant* reported that *Sabotage* had attracted interest in diplomatic circles due to its resonance with unspecified current events. Furthermore, the Cinéma Marbeuf had received a threat from the infamous “Minos, Eaque et Rhadamante,” a parcel bomber who had committed a series of attacks in France since 1934. It was perhaps not lost on the cinemagoer that the film itself begins with a power failure in a cinema under the ownership of the foreign terrorist Verloc (*L’Intransigeant*, January 7, 1937, 6).

Terrorism and the immigrant problem featured in the literature of the decade, too. Jacques Lovitch’s 1932 novel *Tempête sur l’Europe* told the story of an international white Russian plot to assassinate world leaders, including the French president. However, the terrorists fall victim to the manipulation of the Communist International and their plot culminates in a war between France and the Soviet Union, the latter supported by a rearmed Germany. The novel was presented in a semi-documentary style: in the preface to the work, conservative journalist Henry Rollin claimed that the book was in fact a translation of a 1921 Russian text that had surely inspired Gorgulov’s murder of the Doumer (Coeuré and Monier 2000, 41). Like *Tempête sur l’Europe*, Charles Plisnier’s 1937 *Faux Passeports* – winner of the Prix Goncourt – drew inspiration from the contemporary climate of immigration and violence in Europe. Written in the form of a memoir, the book commenced with a note on

the veracity of the events reported.<sup>3</sup> Throughout the story, the communist narrator encounters a number of political agitators as he travels across Europe. Notable among them is Santiago Maurer, a Spanish anarcho-syndicalist on the run in Belgium for his part in the assassination of the brutal military governor of Seville, General Salvador Alva – an act of terrorism, according to the narrator. Escaping to Brussels via Paris, Maurer is arrested by the Belgian authorities and awaits extradition for the crime of murder. However, the Madrid government, wary of turning Maurer into a socialist martyr at a time of domestic strife, refuses to file the requisite extradition papers with Brussels. With the Belgian authorities unwilling to imprison him indefinitely he is released without charge, granted leave to stay in the country, and even given official identity papers, despite having immigrated with a false passport (Plisnier 1938, 13-92). While it is not the purpose here to use fictional works on the screen and page to explain terrorism in France (Laqueur 1977, 15-16)<sup>4</sup>, these cultural productions provide evidence of the way in which contemporary concerns influenced cultural productions that reached large audiences. The “problem” of immigrants in France who had abused their hosts’ hospitality, imported terrorism, and refused to leave, was reported frequently in the national press. The discourse of terrorism frequently blurs the lines between fact and fiction and this was no less true in 1930s France.

---

<sup>3</sup> The references to Plisnier’s novel relate to the English translation, published by Boriswood in London in 1938 as *Memoirs of a Secret Revolutionary*; 11-12.

<sup>4</sup> In an important article on the state of terrorism research during the 1970s, Walter Laqueur noted that, ‘[f]iction holds more promise for the understanding of the terrorist phenomenon than political science..’, suggesting that fictional works were valuable sources of ‘historical evidence and psychological explanation’, of terrorism.

An examination of constructions of terrorism and how the label was deployed during the 1930s permits the establishment of several key tenets of the phenomenon in the French imagination. Terrorism was the enterprise of dark and shadowy groups. These groups operated in more than one country but it was impossible to know the extent to which they exerted their influence. Their operatives were political zealots and one could not be sure when and where they would next strike. The police were thus forced into a reactive role, always one step behind their enemy's latest plot. If the immigrant problem persisted and France's borders remained open, foreigners – perhaps directed by a hostile government – would continue to perpetrate terrorist outrages on French soil. For a French reader of *Faux Passeports*, the character of Maurer – a known terrorist able to travel at will despite false papers, extradition, and deportation orders – would have been familiar; sections of the press reported that such men flooded into France every day.

### **Not by French hands: the bombings of 11 September 1937**

At 10 p.m. on September 11, 1937, two explosions in the Etoile district shattered the calm of the Parisian night. The first destroyed the entrance hall of the building at 45, rue Boissière, seat of the Groupe des Industries métallurgiques de la région parisienne. The second more destructive explosion blew open the façade of 4, rue de Presbourg, the headquarters of the Confédération générale du patronat français. A plume of smoke stretched 100 metres into the air while debris littered a blast radius of twenty-five metres. Under the rubble lay the bodies of two police officers, Victor Legnier and Maxime Truchet, caught in the blast while making their nightly rounds. The only clue as to the identity of the bomber was provided by the concierges who had each taken delivery of a wooden case from a man in a light grey cap and white shirt collar (AN BB18 3061/2, “1ère partie: Etat actuel de l'information au regard des diverses inculpations et des différents inculpés,” 28-29). The nationality of the bomber was



an immediate matter of interest: it was noted in several newspapers that the unknown man spoke French with no accent and in a “very ‘French’,” way (*Le Petit Journal*, September 14, 1937, 4).

The attack was the latest outrage in a yearlong period of violence in France. Bombings had taken place in several regions of the country. In May, a device exploded on the Bordeaux-Vintimille train while another was discovered at Cerbère in the tunnel that connected France with Spain. In August, planes destined for Republican Spain were damaged by explosives at the Toussus-le-Noble airfield. The perpetrators of these attacks remained at large. Meanwhile, a series of brutal and unsolved murders had been committed. In January 1937, Russian banker and left-winger Dimitri had been brutally stabbed to death in broad daylight in Pairs Bois de Boulogne. In May, bar worker and private detective Laetitia Toureaux was found dead in a Parisian metro car. The so-called ‘metro enigma’ attracted a great deal of public attention as much for Toureaux’s connection to the capital’s seamy underworld as for the circumstances of the crime: how had the murderer managed to commit the crime and flee during the seconds it had taken the train to travel between neighbouring metro stations? The following month, prominent Italian antifascists Carlo and Nello Roselli were found shot and stabbed to death at the side of a country lane near Bagnoles-de-l’Orne (Brunelle and Finley-Croswhite 2012). Some commentators connected the Paris bombings in September with these unexplained acts of violence that had punctuated the year up to that point (*Ce Soir*, September 14, 1937, 3).

This was not the first time that France had experienced a terrorist bombing. The names of nineteenth-century anarchist bombers Ravachol, Auguste Vaillant, and Emile Henry had gone down in popular folklore. But in the febrile climate of 1937, the Etoile bombings were presented as different to the attacks of the 1890s. Many perceived them to be the worst terrorist attacks ever perpetrated on French soil. Furthermore, the bombings

seemed to herald the dawn of a new and more dangerous era of terrorism. Writing in *L'Echo de Paris*, lawyer Maurice Garçon compared the bombing to the anarchist crimes of the 1890s but admitted that the Etoile attack was “unprecedented” (*Echo de Paris*, October 5, 1937, 1; 5). In *L'Action Française* Léon Daudet stated crudely that, “[t]he bombs of fifty years ago were like Bonnevey’s<sup>5</sup> farts compared to those that demolished the two buildings [at the Etoile]” (*Action Française*, September 14, 1937, 1). A wistful eye was cast back to the époque of Ravachol and Vaillant (a “tragic and exciting time,” according to *Détective*) (*Détective*, September 23, 1937, 2-4; 5-6). Articles on historical anarchist terrorism further served to demonstrate that France had been free from home-grown terrorism for the better part of fifty years. “With [the execution] of Emile Henry [in 1894],” *Paris-Soir* concluded, “the last *French* terrorist died” (*Paris-Soir*, September 19, 1937, 7 [author’s emphasis]).

Reports of the explosives employed in the attacks did little to allay fears that a new form of terrorism was in the offing. The Director of the Parisian Municipal Laboratory, M. Kling, told reporters that unlike the homemade concoctions of the anarchist bomber, the explosives in September 1937, “could only have been made by technicians,” in “war factories” and “very well-equipped workshops” (*Echo de Paris*, September 13, 1937, 1, 3). Constance Bantman has argued that, during the nineteenth-century anarchist scare, fears often focused on the anarchists’ use of chemistry and modern inventions such as dynamite, a fact that reflected fin-de-siècle concerns over the ends to which one might employ “modern” technology and science (Bantman 2013, 113). In 1937, news of the level of sophistication of the *machines infernales* hinted at similar concerns. Yet they betrayed, too, anxiety about the foreign provenance of the attack and the technological pre-eminence of France’s European neighbours. Kling observed that the picric acid used in the contraptions was rare in France

---

<sup>5</sup> Deputy and chair of the parliamentary inquiry into the events of February 1934.

but much easier to find abroad. Minister of the Interior Marx Dormoy compounded this suspicion when he stated that the hexogen used to trigger the explosion was, “practically unobtainable in our country” (*Echo de Paris*, September 13, 1937, 1, 3). With the forensic evidence having apparently confirmed foreign involvement, the press’s anarchist retrospective romanticised a time when terrorists acted alone rather than in the pay of foreign governments; the anarchist bogeyman of the 1890s paled in comparison to Stalinist and Hitlerian zealots.

The destructive power of the explosives was brought home to the French through the reproduction of photographs of the damage caused to the buildings. News of terrorist violence has long spread via the medium of images. At the close of the nineteenth century, the nascent picture press helped to construct popular imaginations of terrorism. The illustrated supplement to *Le Petit Journal* had printed vivid and terrifying drawings of the anarchist attacks of the 1890s, notably Auguste Vaillant’s nail bomb attack in the Chamber of Deputies on 9 December 1893 (Oudin 2002, 105). The following year in July, the assassination of French President Sadi Carnot saw the supplement picture the moment of the fatal stabbing, the red of the President’s bloodied sash the only flash of colour in an otherwise sombre scene (Lavenir 2002, 24). Photographs of the Etoile attacks and their accompanying descriptions contributed to the public conceptualisation of the terrorist act. The building on the rue de Presbourg suffered more significant damage than that on the rue Boissière; its image consequently featured more frequently on in the press. Newspapers showed the “ruins” and “rubble” of the building, “ripped open” (*éventré*) by the explosion (*Le Matin*, September 11-15, 1937, 1; *Ce Soir*, September 13, 1937, 1; *L’Echo de Paris*, September 13, 1937, 1; *L’Humanité*, September 13, 1937, 1; *L’Intransigeant*, September 13, 1937, 1). The image in *L’Intransigeant* showed the “devastated décor” of the interior of the office building, juxtaposing the everyday with the extraordinary (*L’Intransigeant*, September 13, 1937, 1). In

*Le Petit Journal*, the legend to the photograph of the Presbourg building drew on fears of modern warfare and aerial bombardment in the year of Guernica: “[a] vision of war in the heart of Paris. The building on the rue de Presbourg ripped open as if by an aerial bomb” (*Le Petit Journal*, September 13, 1937, 1). *Détective* featured copious amounts of photographs of destruction, time bombs, and images of the victims of previous bombings. Its September 30 issue featured a double-page spread upon which a map of France was drawn. An array of images and arrows indicated to readers the locations across the country where recent events pointed to the involvement of terrorists and the secret agents of foreign governments. From Brest to Marseille via Paris, the picture demonstrated that the country was riddled with a terrorist cancer (*Détective*, September 30, 1937, 2-3).

Conspiracy theories invested the attacks with political meaning (de Graaf 2015, 411-427). Two days after bombings, *Le Populaire* reported, “The investigation does not seem to have made much progress. It is all the more difficult given that the criminals have a head start of several hours over the police... However, some information has been gathered. Impressions are coming out.... The careful preparation of the attack makes one think of an organised gang directed by a foreign secret police” (*Le Populaire*, September 13, 1937, 1-2). The subsequent exposure of the Cagoule (September 17) and the Francoist commando attack in Brest (September 20) seemed to confirm the interference of foreign fascist powers in France. *Le Populaire* demanded: “The territory of the Republic must be protected against the terrorist acts of fascists” (*Le Populaire*, September 13, 1937, 1-2). Meanwhile, for the right, which saw the hand of Moscow behind the violence, the arrest of well-known foreign anarchists in apparent connection with the attack (September 16) and the abduction of General Miller by Soviet agents (September 24) suggested, too, the meddling of foreign powers. Paul Estaque of *Le Petit Journal* blamed Spanish anarchists. He admitted that some French may yet be found to be mixed up in the affair, but that “imported terrorism” had a

“specifically foreign” character (*Le Petit Journal*, September 15, 1937, 4). The competing conspiracy theories, though motivated by different concerns and invested with different meanings, drew on contemporary fears about the deteriorating international peace.

It was thus at foreign spies and immigrant terrorists that the press pointed an accusatory finger. Drawing on established notions of terrorism, the violence had been imported to France and directed from the capitals of one’s political enemies, whether Moscow or Berlin and Rome. A French national *could not* have committed such an atrocity: “Terrorism is not French ...these crimes [are] not French” (*Paris-Soir*, September 19, 1937, 11); “...the bombs are not French” (*L’Oeuvre*, September 13, 1937, 1); “... there are weapons that the French do not use. These bombs came from abroad” (*Le Matin*, September 14, 1937, 1); “‘Frenchmen did not do that’ ... the French temperament is disgusted by these brutal, cowardly, and stupid acts of terrorism” (*Le Petit Journal*, September 16, 1937, 1). According to Léon Jouhaux, leader of France’s largest trades union confederation, crimes of this nature were “contrary to the French spirit” and such practices should not be allowed to “take root in our country” (*L’Oeuvre*, September 13, 1937, 1, 4-5). Speaking at the funeral service of the two murdered police officers, the president of the Paris town council the Alliance démocratique’s René Failliot stated, “public opinion refuses to believe that the attack was conceived by a French brain or executed by French hands” (*Le Matin*, September 16, 1937, 2). Reports of the arrests of alleged Italian anarchists reinforced the connection between terrorism and the foreigner. A call for action could be found in all sections of the press from the extreme left to the extreme right: “France for the French!”

The government’s response to the outrage targeted immigrants first and foremost. This marked a novel response to terrorism in France. Unlike in Britain, where the 1905 Aliens Act was introduced in response to the apparent threat of anarchist asylum seekers, the French Republican response to anarchism had been the political oppression of the ideology

(Bantman 2013, 131, 153-156). The so-called “Wicked Laws” (*lois scélérates*) of 1893-1894 provided for the legal persecution of anarchist groups and their sympathisers as well as for the closure of anarchist publications (Bantman 2013, 25; Shaya 2010, 524, 531-2). In 1937, however, in response to the crisis Prime Minister Camille Chautemps announced the drafting of a Foreigners’ Statute. A statute for foreigners had been mooted in France since 1935 and the project had attracted cross-party support. The left saw in a statute a means by which to elaborate a charter of rights and protections for immigrants; the right, on the other hand, believed that such a statute would better help to expel so-called undesirables (Schor 1996, 158).<sup>6</sup> Chautemps located the roots of terrorism squarely within the immigrant community. He stated that, “acts of violence have multiplied on our territory. Bombs have been planted whether on trains, in aerodromes, in stations... It seems therefore necessary to modify sensitively our policy on the surveillance of foreign undesirables”. He outlined that the Statute would reinstate passport checking procedures between France and neighbouring countries “through which the undesirables can pass to penetrate France” as well as reinforcing the surveillance of foreigners residing in the country (*Le Matin* September 16, 1937, 1). An inter-ministerial commission was established to examine the problem. Led by Radical deputy for the Meurthe-et-Moselle Philippe Serre – who was also appointed under-secretary of State for Immigration - the commission suggested, among other things, a measure that would grant the Minister of the Interior the power to expel any foreigner deemed to be a threat to State security (Harouni 1999, 70; Caron 1999, 164; Schor 1985, 646-7). As the commission deliberated, the number of expulsions rocketed (Rosenberg 2006, 99).

---

<sup>6</sup> Ralph Schor writes that it was only in the wake of the terrorist crisis that the term “undesirable,” though long used in certain sections of the press and politics, became a “banal” and “usual” term.

Chautemps's announcement was greeted with satisfaction in the press. Within days of the bombings, *L'Oeuvre* had demanded that France put the security of its people – “decent people” - above the rights of immigrants (*L'Oeuvre*, September 14, 1937, 1). *L'Echo de Paris* agreed: it seemed “almost impossible” to balance the needs of national security with the French tradition of hospitality to foreigners (*Echo de Paris*, September 15, 1937, 1). *Le Matin* stated that it was high time that “foreign viruses” were eradicated and the borders closed (*Le Matin*, September 14, 1937, 1). Even *Détective* demanded that a new Foreigners' Statute be “the first consequence of the Etoile attacks” (*Détective*, September 23, 1937, 4). Meanwhile, the Popular Front's Centre de liaison des Comités pour le statut des immigrants welcomed the new statute that would protect France from “foreign terrorism” (Schor 1985, 644n55; *Journal Officiel*, 1, 2 and 3 May 1938, 4967-8).

The plan for a Foreigners' Statute did not come to fruition; Chautemps fell from office in spring 1938. The commission met only once and Serre's post was eliminated from the subsequent Blum government (Caron 1999, 462n107; 162; 168; Schor 1985, 646). New laws relating to immigrants *were* introduced by Edouard Daladier's administration in May 1938 (Schor 1985, 666-668). Daladier's decrees tightened the surveillance measures to which immigrants were subject and heralded a new crackdown on those in an irregular or illegal situation – people deemed infamously as ‘unworthy’ of French hospitality (Lewis 2007, 219-20). The decrees spoke in part to fears over the looming international crisis and the presence of a fifth column in the country (Maga 1982, 424-442). The legislation also sought to respond to the influx of refugees to France in the aftermath of the Nazi annexation of Austria as well as new repressive legislation in several East European states (Lewis 2007, 217-9; Caron 1999, 171-4). However, as Rahma Harouni has noted, there was “great continuity” between the projects of Chautemps's commission on immigration and the content of Daladier's laws (Harouni 1999, 71). Indeed, Albert Sarraut, who was Minister of the

Interior in both the Chautemps and the Daladier government, intended the decrees to clampdown on internal subversion rather than the activities of foreign spies. According to Vicki Caron, “[i]n this sense, the May 2, 1938, decree law stemmed directly from Chautemps’s antforeign crackdown in the fall of 1937” (Caron 1999, 175); an antforeign crackdown that stemmed at least in part from French understandings of terrorism.

### **The Cagoule Unmasked**

The perpetrator of the Etoile bombings was not foreign. René Locuty, who had delivered the bombs on behalf of the OSARN/Cagoule, was French. Cagouards were also responsible for the murders of Navachine, Toureaux, and the Rosellis as well as the sabotage at the Toussus-le-Noble airfield. While the press had caught wind of the arrest of several Cagouards in September 1937, the full extent of the group’s conspiracy against the Third Republic was revealed only when it launched an abortive coup on 16 November 1937 – ironically, the same day as the publication of the League of Nations’ Convention for the Prevention and Punishment of Terrorism. The Cagoule’s plans for the overthrow of the Republic were sophisticated. Under the pretext of defending the country against a communist uprising, OSARN members disguised as police officers would occupy government ministries. Meanwhile, their comrades would seize public utilities and take control of the capital’s water supply (Brunelle and Finley-Croswhite 2012). A list of political opponents to be imprisoned or executed included socialist leader Léon Blum; the group even possessed a plan of Blum’s apartment (AN BB/18 3061/2, “1ère partie: Etat actuel de l’information”). By January 1939, police had impounded a frightening amount of weapons belonging to the group, including sixteen machine guns, 259 automatic rifles, over 9000 grenades, 150 kilograms of picric acid and an anti-tank gun with 69 shells (AN BB/18 3061/2, “Etat approximatif des armes, munitions, explosifs découverts dans les dépôts de l’OSARN”). Yet as with previous



instances of terrorism, the unknown aspects of the affair weighed heavily on the public consciousness. In February 1938, *Police-Magazine* featured an interview with a man who claimed to be a member of the Cagoule. The interview began with a word of caution for the reader and for France: “Warning! Warning! They are planning something. They are planning new attacks, one of which’s repercussions will be far more harmful, more dangerous for the peace of France than previous [attacks].” And, while many Cagoulards had been arrested, the author asked, “how many are still free? How many arms dumps remain undiscovered?” (*Police-Magazine*, February 13, 1937, 8-9).

It was the group’s large stockpile of armaments that led the Public Prosecutor to consider the group to be of a terrorist nature (AN BB18 3061/2, “Le Procureur Général près la Cour d’Appel de Paris à Monsieur le Garde des Sceaux,” December 1, 1937). However, in the press the terrorist character of the group was less certain. Terrorism was so thoroughly associated with foreignness that the existence of a *French* terrorist group seemed difficult to comprehend, especially when war veterans were amongst those arrested. When General Edouard Duseigneur was arrested on suspicion of being one of the group’s ringleaders, his war record was cited as proof of his “ardent” and “brave” character. A man like Duseigneur could not be involved in a plot against France (*L’Echo de Paris*, November 27, 1937, 1). The conservative veterans’ association the Union nationale des combattants (UNC) condemned the government’s harassment of veterans. In response to the discovery of apparent Cagoulard arms dumps, the UNC argued, “there are few amongst [the veterans] who do not possess at home some rifle, bayonet, dagger, parabellum, carbine,” or some such souvenir from the war (*La Voix du combattant* October 20, 1937). OSARN chief Eugène Deloncle later appealed to the UNC for help from his prison cell, claiming that the majority of Cagoulards were “experienced war veterans, gloriously wounded, mentioned in dispatches or decorated” (AN BB/18 3061/4, Eugène Deloncle to Georges Lebecq, 1 October 1938).

For some publications, the Cagoule, though French, was foreign in inspiration. Thus *Paris-Soir* saw in the group the spirit of the Ustaša (*Paris-Soir*, January 14, 1938, 1). *L'Oeuvre* agreed: it referred to the Cagoule as the “French Ustaša,” while remarking, too, that the organisational model for the group was that of Hitler’s combat units (*L'Oeuvre*, November 21, 1937, 5; November 21, 1937, 1). Writing in *Le Figaro*, François Mauriac expressed his surprise that the Cagoulards were French. He called them “a truly new and unusual phenomenon,” that he could not hope to understand. Mauriac wondered whether their real crime was to have “sold their soul to a foreign demon” (*Le Figaro*, January 21, 1938, 1). Meanwhile, in the 20 January 1938 edition of *Détective*, the magazine’s editor called the Cagoulards, “the bloodstained madmen who were not afraid, under the cover of a mystique, to bring to France methods of murder which MUST not become common practice here”. An image of a hand driving a dagger into a map of France accompanied the article (*Détective*, January 20, 1938, 2 [my emphasis]). In the magazine’s May 26, 1938, issue – incidentally, a special issue on the immigrant problem - Montarron wrote that if the “known leaders [of the CSAR] are French... a neighbouring nation were not unfamiliar with its finances.” He reassured readers that the Sûreté Nationale was busy with its mission to, “put under surveillance and track down the most dangerous undesirables: the terrorists” (*Détective*, May 26, 1938, 4). Terrorism, it seemed, was still a foreign import.

Articles on the alien character of the Cagoule appeared alongside those that sought to discredit the seriousness of the group. *L'Echo de Paris*, for example, argued in September 1937 that the “Fantastical Affair of the Cagoulards” should not distract attention from the investigation of the Etoile bombings (*Echo de Paris* September 18, 1937, 1, 3). Even Marx Dormoy – who later, in an instance of grandstanding for the press, referred to the group as the “famous terrorist organisation” (*Le Populaire*, January 11, 1938, 1) - had in September 1937, termed its actions “pranks.” Yet the police had been tracking the group since February 1937

and were aware of its role in the series of murders that year (Brunelle and Finley-Crowwhite 2010, 150-1). Likewise, M. Kling, who had so terrified the public with his appreciation of the time bombs used in the Etoile attacks, was scathing when it came to the Cagoule's other explosive devices. Their grenades were "made by amateurs" and "poorly finished, made hastily, the work of poor and incompetent craftsmen" (*Détective*, February 3, 1938, 1-2). The left did not dismiss the threat of the Cagoule quite so easily. Antifascists understood the group in relation to the menace of both the international and domestic extreme right. "The Cagoule Plot! The Hitlerian Plot!" *L'Humanité* thundered, seeing the hand of both the Gestapo and the OVRA in the conspiracy (*L'Humanité* September 18, 1937, 1). The Radical left connected the Cagoulards to the threat from domestic fascism and specifically the men who took part in an extreme right-wing demonstration on February 6, 1934 (*Le Temps*, January 28, 1938, 2). The socialists, however, perceived something different in the Cagoule. *Le Populaire* referred to the group as a terrorist outfit less frequently than its left-wing allies. In fact, the newspaper suggested that the organisation was much better-organised and well-funded than the average terrorist group. Referring to Cagoulard plans for a coup, *Le Populaire* claimed: "[a] plain old League or a terrorist group could not pull that off" (*Le Populaire*, November 18, 1937, 1).

The press contributed to the idea that the sensational affair of the Cagoule was literally unbelievable. The episodic release of information seemed to mimic that of a detective serial and readers awaited the next instalment with baited breath. In November, *L'Echo de Paris* scoffed once again at the "fantastic story" of the Cagoule, in which the "arrest of some stooges with bizarre roles" was the latest twist in the "detective story" (*Echo de Paris*, November 18, 1937, 1). The newspaper claimed that Dormoy – the "director" – was drip-feeding the public with news in order to, "embellish the action with sensational events, in order to thrill the reader" (*Echo de Paris*, November 19, 1937, 3; November 25, 1937, 1).

*Déetective* likewise described police inspector general Pierre Mondanel as a “masterful director.” The whole story itself was a perfect “drama” in which the “acts [were] admirably constructed.” The magazine’s 27 January 1938 issue focused on the revelations of Jacqueline Blondet, mistress to the Cagoule’s Dr Henri Martin (Brunelle and Finley-Croswhite 2010, 151). The couple were depicted as, “the two new stars” of the affair, with Blondet described as “[v]ery pretty, hair the colour of ripened wheat, very elegant, very cinema star” (*Déetective*, January 27, 1938, 2-4). Even communist Fernand Fontenay, author of a 1938 book on the Cagoule, described the events as, “exciting... in the style of a detective novel” (Fontenay 1938, 12). The effect of such reporting was to once again blur fact and fiction with regard to terrorism.

Despite the seriousness of the revelations, the image of the Cagoule as a gang of pranksters engaged in a real-life crime drama stuck. Indeed, François Mitterand (no stranger to the extreme right-wing milieu of the interwar years) described the OSARN as, “ridiculous playacting” (Benamou 2001, 167-8). Tales of candlelit initiation ceremonies involving hooded men and oaths taken on pain of death doubtless fed such ideas about a group that ultimately failed. However, the fact that the Cagoulards were French played no small part in the construction of this image. In the public understanding of terrorism established during the 1930s, terrorism as the foreign “Other” could not be committed by Frenchmen in the name of French values. The Cagoule was therefore something else: a secret society, an underground league, a mysterious club with ideas for action beyond its powers. But it was not a terrorist group; the concerted attempts to trivialise its “terrorism” showed it to be the exception that proved the rule.

## **Conclusion**

By the outbreak of the Second World War, terrorism as a French and international juridical concept remained undefined (Waciórski 1939, 6). The Third Republic, whose final years had been so beset with “terrorism,” thus passed out of existence in 1940 without the crime on its statute book. It was under the Vichy regime that the term “terrorism” first appeared in French law. On June 5, 1943, Marshal Pétain’s regime established special sections within appeal courts for the trial of crimes that promoted or encouraged, “terrorism, communism, anarchy, social or national subversion,” or, “rebellion against the established social order” (*Journal Officiel de l’Etat Français*, June 24, 1943, 1714-5). Punishment for such crimes extended from imprisonment to forced labour and death. The law was prompted by the increase in violence against representatives of the regime and the Occupier from resistance movements. Vichy’s Minister of Justice Maurice Gabode stated that under such circumstances the threat of civil war was real; he thus sought to ensure that magistrates came down hard on “terrorists” to deter further acts (Sansico 2016, 37-39). The *Etat français* later added to its legislation on terrorism. On January 20, 1944, the crimes of assassination, murder, attempted assassination and attempted murder, and acts that would “promote terrorist activities” were rendered liable for court martial (*Journal Officiel de l’Etat Français*, January 21, 1944, 238). The law provided for the immediate execution of people caught in the process of committing a crime or in cases where the culpability of the suspect was plain. Vichy’s laws on terrorism did not simply concern the repression of violence. The law of December 24, 1943, rendered insurance companies liable for damage caused by “sabotage” or “terrorism,” while the law of 15 May 1944 provided a pension for civilian victims of “attacks of a terrorist nature” (*Journal Officiel de l’Etat Français*, March 12, 1944, 753-4; May 31, 1944, 1405). Still, Vichy’s laws on terrorism did not define the phenomenon and the application of the term remained at the discretion of the authorities.

Nevertheless, one perceives in the collaborationist press an understanding of terrorism that was largely consonant with that of the late Third Republic, that is terrorism was understood through the lens of Frenchness and the things this was thought to stand for and against. While the regime could not deny that Frenchmen were engaged in terrorism, it presented such violence as an un-French act of committed at the behest of a hostile foreign government. In December 1941, Paul Marion's General Secretariat for Information, argued that terrorism threatened peace, the internal unity of the country, and the rebirth of France. The counter-terrorist struggle was thus framed as the patriotic duty of all French against foreigners and traitors directed from Moscow or London (*Paris-Soir*, December 10, 1941, 8; *Le Matin* December 10, 1941, 3). Three years later, historian René Martel made the same connection in an article entitled, "Foreigners and terrorism." Martel found it "regrettable" that foreigners participated in attacks against, "the person and property of *authentic* French." He continued that France had for too long been the dumping ground of Europe and that in the "interests of decent foreigners," it was time to sort the wheat from the chaff (*Paris-Soir*, January 22, 1944, 3 [my emphasis]). Such sentiments would not have been out of place in the final years of the Third Republic.

The experience of France during later episodes of terrorist violence saw certain themes, established during the 1930s, recur. Notably, the issues of citizenship, immigration and "Frenchness" in understandings of terrorism have proved remarkably robust as have the exceptional measures deployed to contain the perceived threat.

During the Algerian conflict, North Africans living in Paris came under close surveillance, especially once the Front de la Libération Nationale began its campaign of violence. Police took two approaches to combat the "terrorist" threat. Firstly, officers made use of laws against vagrancy to arrest and hold Algerians in large numbers (Blanchard 2007, 1-21). Such measures provided an ad-hoc solution in the continued absence of legislation on

terrorism following the deletion of Vichy's laws from the statute book. For some officers, they were far from satisfactory. A senior police official complained in 1958, "We know from experience, that the penal code is rich, but I admit that none of us would have guessed that the texts chosen to combat doubtless the most dangerous terrorists that Paris has known in centuries, would be those relating to nineteenth-century tramps and the present-day homeless" (Blanchard 2007, 18n55). Secondly, from March 1958 under the influence of Paris Prefect of Police Maurice Papon, the capital's Brigade des Agressions et Violences were employed to gather masses of information on the Algerian community. The Brigades effectively became counter-terrorist squads, working in conjunction with the huge information gathering service, the Service de Coordination des Affaires Algériennes (Blanchard 2006, 61-72). Algerians at this time were French citizens; yet their continued "Otherness" associated them with terrorism.

Terrorism, Frenchness, and citizenship continue to be intimately connected. During the 1990s an amendment to the Civil Code introduced "acts of terrorism" into French law for the first time in response to the terror campaign of the Groupe Islamique Armé. The amendment to Article 25 added an 'act of terrorism' to the list of infractions for which naturalised French men and women could forfeit their citizenship. The amendment raised few eyebrows in parliament even though an "act of terrorism" went undefined (Beauchamps 2017, 49-52).

The extreme right-wing Front National has made much of the alleged connection between immigration and *insécurité* (law and order) a central pillar of its political platform. Jean-Marie Le Pen – president of the party between 1972 and 2011 – singled out the North African community in France as a hotbed of crime and terrorism. In a feverish political climate after 9/11, Le Pen stoked fears of Islamic extremism and non-European immigration in his campaign for the 2002 presidential contest. Le Pen was ultimately unsuccessful yet the

Front National under his leadership and that of his daughter Marine after January 2011 has succeeded in setting the mainstream political agenda on immigration and the attendant threat from terrorism. Thus the presidential election of 2007 saw both the conservative candidate, Nicolas Sarkozy, and the socialist Ségolène Royal bring to the fore the subject of national identity. In an attempt to win over Front National voters, Sarkozy posed immigration and Islam as dual threats to indigenous French culture and domestic law and order, even proposing the establishment of a Ministry for Immigration and National Identity should he be elected (Martigny 2009; Haegel 2011).

Following the *Charlie Hebdo* murders in January 2015, news channel *France 24* located the causes of the attack beyond the borders of France, namely in foreign extremist organisations and overseas terrorist training camps. As for the attackers themselves, the channel frequently referred to their African origin and their religion, both of which had obstructed their integration into the national community. Less attention was given to the fact that the terrorists had been born and bred in France. According to Eva Polonska-Kimunguyi and Marie Gillespie, “[the terrorists] emerged from [*France 24*’s] stories as foreigners, [and] strangers to their country. Their attacks were seen as an external undertaking, not directly produced by France and its people” (Polonska-Kimunguyi and Gillespie 2016, 569, 578).

In the wake of the Paris terrorist attacks of 13 November 2015, French president François Hollande sought a revision of the law pertaining to naturalisation. While Article 25 of the Civil Code had, since 1996, provided for the forfeiture of French citizenship by a naturalised citizen found guilty of an act of terrorism, the president looked to extend the penalty to individuals born in France (Beauchamp 2017, 48). To do so would be to enshrine in law the fact that one could not be both French and a terrorist. The French of the 1930s shared this sentiment.



## References

- Appelbaum, Robert. 2016. *Terrorism Before the Letter: Mythography and Political Violence in England, Scotland, and France, 1559-1642*. Oxford.
- Bantman, Constance. 2013. *The French Anarchists in London, 1880-1914: Exile and Transnationalism in the First Globalisation*. Liverpool.
- Beauchamps, Marie. 2017. "Perverse Tactics: 'Terrorism' and National Identity in France." *Culture, Theory and Critique* 58, no. 1: 48-61.
- Berstein, Serge. 1985. "L'affrontement simulé des années 1930." *Vingtième Siècle. Revue d'histoire* 5, no. 1 : 39-54.
- Blanchard, Emmanuel. 2007. "L'encadrement des Algériens de Paris (1944-1954), entre contraintes juridiques et arbitraire policier." *Crime, Histoire & Sociétés / Crime, History & Societies*, 11, no. 1: 1-21.

- Blanchard, Emmanuel. 2006. "Police judiciaire et pratiques d'exception pendant la guerre d'Algérie." *Vingtième Siècle. Revue d'histoire* 90, no. 2: 61-72.
- Blatt, Joel. 2002. "The Cagoule Plot." In *Crisis and Renewal in France, 1918-1962*, edited by Kenneth Mouré and Martin S. Alexander, 84-104. New York.
- Borne, Dominique. 1995. "Cagoule." In *Dictionnaire historique de la vie politique française au XXe siècle*, edited by Jean-Francois Sirinelli, 122-124. Paris.
- Bouhey, Vivien. 2008. *Les Anarchistes contre la République. Contribution à l'histoire des réseaux sous la Troisième République (1880-1914)*. Rennes.
- Brunelle, Gayle K. and Annette Finley-Croswite. 2012. *Murder in the Metro: Laetitia Toureaux and the Cagoule in 1930s France*. Baton Rouge.
- Caron, Vicki. 1999. *Uneasy Asylum: France and the Jewish Refugee Crisis, 1933-1942*. Stanford.
- Coeuré, Sophie and Frédéric Monier. 2000. "Paul Gorgulov, assassin de Paul Doumer (1932)." *Vingtième Siècle. Revue d'histoire* 65, no. 1: 39-40.
- Darlix, Paul. 1932. *Terrorisme sur le monde*. Paris.
- Dillinger, Johannes. 2016. "Organized Arson as a Political Crime: The Construction of a 'Terrorist' Menace in the Early Modern Period." *Crime, Histories & Sociétés/Crime, History & Societies* 10, no. 2: 1-21
- Ditrych, Ondrej. 2014. *Tracing the Discourses of Terrorism: Identity, Genealogy and State*. Basingstoke; New York.
- Douglas, Allen. 1984. "Violence and Fascism: The Case of the Faisceau." *Journal of Contemporary History* 19, no. 4: 689-712.
- De Vabres, Henri Donnedieu. 1935. "La répression internationale des délits de droits de gens." *Nouvelle revue de droit international privé: Tous les aspects de la vie juridique internationale de l'individu* 2: 7-21.

Foshko, Katherine. 2009. "The Paul Doumer Assassination and the Russian Diaspora in Interwar Paris." *French History* 23, no. 3: 383-404.

de Graaf, Beatrice. 2015. "Counter-terrorism and Conspiracy: Historicizing the Struggle against Terrorism." In *The Routledge History of Terrorism*, edited by Randall D. Law, 411-427. Abingdon.

Haegel, Florence. 2011. "Nicolas Sarkozy a-t-il radicalisé la droite française? Changements idéologiques et étiquetages politiques." *French Politics, Culture & Society* 29 no. 3: 62-77.

Hagenloh, Paul M. 2015. "State Terrorism in Early Twentieth-century Europe." In *The Routledge History of Terrorism*, edited by Randall D. Law, 159-177. Abingdon.

Harouni, Rahma. 1999. "Le débat autour du statut des étrangers dans les années 1930." *Le Mouvement social* 188, no. 3: 61-76.

Haupt, Heinz-Gerhard and Klaus Weinhauer. 2011. "Terrorism and the State." In *Political Violence in Twentieth-Century Europe*, edited by Donald Bloxham and Robert Gerwarth, 176-209. Cambridge.

Jackson, Edward J. 2008. "Punishing the Mad Bomber: Questions of Moral Responsibility in the Trials of French Anarchist Terrorists, 1886-1887." *French History* 22, no. 1: 51-73.

Jackson, Richard, "The Literary Turn in Terrorism Studies." in *The Routledge History of Terrorism*. In *The Routledge History of Terrorism*, edited by Randall D. Law, 487-500. Abingdon.

Jenkins, Brian and Chris Millington. 2015. *France and Fascism: February 1934 and the Dynamics of Political Crisis*. Abingdon.

Jensen, Richard Bach. 2015. *The Battle against Anarchist Terrorism: An International History, 1878-1934*. Cambridge.

Kovács, Péter. 2002. "Le grand précédent: la Société des Nations et son action après l'attentat contre Alexandre, roi de Yougoslavie." *Europe Integration Studies* 1: 30-40.

- Laqueur, Walter. 1977. "Interpretations of Terrorism: Fact, Fiction and Political Science." *Journal of Contemporary History* 12, no. 1: 1-42.
- Lavenir, Catherine Bertho. 2002. "Bombes, protes & pistolets. Les âges médiologiques de l'attentat." *Les cahiers de médiologie* 13, no. 1: 17-35.
- Law, Randall D. 2009. *Terrorism: A History*. Cambridge.
- Lay, Howard G. 2001. "'Beau Geste!' (On the Readability of Terrorism)." *Yale French Studies* 101: 79-100.
- Lewis, Mary Dewhurst. 2007. *The Boundaries of the Republic: Migrant Rights and the Limits of Universalism in France, 1918-1940*. Stanford.
- Maga, Timothy P. 1982. "Closing the Door: The French Government and Refugee Policy, 1933-1939." *French Historical Studies* 12, no. 3: 424-442.
- Maitron, Jean. 1992. *Le mouvement anarchiste en France. Tome 1 des origines à 1914*. Paris.
- Martigny, Vincent. "Le débat autour de l'identité nationale dans la campagne présidentielle 2007: Quelle rupture?." *French Politics, Culture & Society* 27, no. 1: 23-42.
- Merriman, John. 2009. *The Dynamite Club: How a Bombing in Fin-de-Siècle Paris Ignited the Age of Modern Terror*. London.
- Millington, Chris. 2014. "Street-fighting Men: Political Violence in Interwar France." *English Historical Review* 538, no. 129: 606-638.
- Monier, Frédéric. 2012. "Défendre des 'terroristes' dans la France de 1935. L'avocat des 'oustachis croates'." *Le mouvement social* 240: 105-120.
- Monier, Frédéric. 2012. "L'attentat de Marseille (9 octobre 1934): Regicide et terrorisme dans les années trente." *La Révolution française. Cahiers de l'Institut d'histoire de la Révolution française* 1 (2012), posted online at <https://lrf.revues.org/461>, consulted 1 March 2017
- Noiriel, Gérard. 1988. *Le creuset français. Histoire de l'immigration XIXe-XXe siècles*. Paris.

- Noiriel, Gérard. 1996. *The French Melting Pot: Immigration, Citizenship, and National Identity*. Minneapolis; London.
- Noiriel, Gérard. 2007. *Immigration, antisémitisme et racisme en France (XIXe-XXe siècle)*. *Discours publics, humiliations privés*. Paris.
- Oudin, Bernard. 2002. "L'anar et le canard," *Les cahiers de médiologie* 13, no. 1: 101-111.
- Parry, DLL. 2003. "Counter Revolution by Conspiracy, 1935-1937." In *The Right in France: From Revolution to Le Pen*, edited by Nicholas Atkin and Frank Tallett, 161-181. London.
- Passmore, Kevin. 1995. "Boy Scouting for Grown-ups? Paramilitarism in the Croix de Feu and the Parti Social Français." *French Historical Studies* 19, no 2: 527-557.
- Polonska-Kimunguyi, Eva and Marie Gillespie. 2016. "Terrorism Discourse on French International Broadcasting: *France 24* and the Case of *Charlie Hebdo* Attacks in Paris." *European Journal of Communication*, 31 no. 5: 568-583.
- Rapoport, David C. 2012. "The Four Waves of Modern Terrorism." In *Terrorism Studies: A Reader*, edited by John Horgan and Kurt Braddock, 41-61. Abingdon.
- Rapoport, David C. 2011. "Reflections on 'Terrorism and the American Experience.'" *Journal of American History* 98, no. 1: 115-120.
- Rosenberg, Clifford. 2006. *Policing Paris: The Origins of Modern Immigration Control between the Wars*. Ithaca and London.
- Sansico, Virginie. 2016. "Le terrorisme, vie et mort d'une notion juridique (1930-1945)." *Archives de la Politique Criminelle* 38, no. 1: 27-45.
- Saul, Ben. "The Legal Response of the League of Nations to Terrorism." *Journal of International Criminal Justice* 4, no 1: 78-102.
- Schinkel, Willem. 2009. "On the Concept of Terrorism." *Contemporary Political Theory* 8, no. 2: 176-198.

Schor, Ralph. 1996. *Histoire de l'immigration en France de la fin du XIXe siècle à nos jours*. Paris.

Schor, Ralph. 1985. *L'opinion française et les étrangers en France, 1919-1939*. Paris.

Shaya, Gregory. 2010. "How to Make an Anarchist Terrorist: An Essay on the Political Imaginary in Fin-de-siècle France." *Journal of Social History* 44, no. 2: 521-543.

Smith, Benjamin K., Scott Englund, Andrea Figueroa-Caballero, Elena Salcido, and Michael Stohl. 2017. "Framing Terrorism: The Communicative Constitution of the Terrorist Actor." In *Constructions of Terrorism: An Interdisciplinary Approach to Research and Policy*, edited by Michael Stohl, Richard Burchill and Scott Englund, 91-108. Oakland, California.

Taylor, Donathan and Yannick Gautron. 2015. "Pre-Modern Terrorism: The Cases of the Sicarii and the Assassins." In *The Routledge History of Terrorism*, edited by Randall D. Law, 28-45. Abingdon.

Vincent, Karelle. "Le régicide en République." *Crime, Histoire & Sociétés/Crime, History & Societies* 3, no. 2: 73-93.

Weigand, Thomas. 2006. "The Universal Terrorist: The International Community Grappling with a Definition." *Journal of International Criminal Justice* 4, no. 5: 912-932.

Winock, Michel. 2014. *Nationalisme, antisémitisme et fascisme en France*. Paris.

Zulaika, Joseba and William A. Douglass. 1996. *Terror and Taboo: The Follies, Fables, and Faces of Terrorism*. New York; Oxford.